CITY OF WELLS.

URBAN SANITARY AUTHORITY.

MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT FOR 1897.

To the Urban Sanitary Authority of the City of Wells.

Area of District, 720 Acres; Estimated Population, 4,900.

26th JANUARY, 1898.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present my Report for the year, 1897.

Geology.

Beds of Lias and Limestone are chiefly met with on the high ground to the North and East. Marl and Gravel in other situations.

Occupations.

Inhabitants chiefly engaged in Trade and Agriculture, large Paper Works employing numerous hands outside the City.

Water Supply

A large and steadily increasing proportion of houses are supplied by the Water Company. This water is abundant and of great purity, and is stored in Reservoirs perfectly enclosed, into which it flows through iron pipes by which it is conveyed through its whole course from the springs, so that contamination is almost impossible. Storage Cisterns for domestic supply are not allowed by the company. The supply is constant during the day, but it is frequently cut off at night in dry seasons. This ought to be had recourse to as seldom as possible, as not only are private fittings injured thereby, but where taps are left unscrewed impure air may be drawn in and absorbed by the water.

Drainage and Sewage Disposal.

The Drainage is good and most Water Closets are flushed by small tanks, which are in frequent use. The New Houses in Wookey Hole Lane which are outside the sewerage system have recently been supplied with Water Closets, to which the Company's Water has been laid on, proper drains have been laid and ventilated, and the sewage ran into a large ventilated covered pit at a distance, so that the nuisance hitherto existing has been reduced to a minimum. New Sewage Works are about to be constructed on the present site, but the Authority are awaiting the result of the Exeter enquiry before deciding what plan to adopt.

Scavenging.

House refuse is removed daily in carts to the Sewage farm, the work has hitherto been intrusted to a contractor, but it has been recently suggested it should be carried out under the direct supervision of the Authority, when it would probably be done more rapidly and efficiently.

Infectious Disease Hospital.

Two cases were admitted into the Infectious Diseases Hospital during the year. I entertain a very decided opinion that this Hospital is not such a building as the City requires and ought to possess, and this is not the first time I have placed such opinion on record.

It consists of only two rudely constructed wards, is unprovided with a nurse's room, bath room, linen or store room of any kind, or water closet contiguous to the building, and it does not possess adequate accommodation for isolation of diseases one from another, as well as isolation of the sexes.

A Scheme for acquiring adjacent land and enlarging the present building was favourably considered and plans prepared as long ago as July, 1896, but no further action has been taken.

Disinfecting Chamber.

Disinfectants.

The Dry Air Disinfecting Chamber is practically useless—as previously reported. The best disinfectants obtainable are liberally supplied when needed, and have full directions attached to all bottles containing them.

Notification of Infectious Disease.

Notification of Infectious Diseases (including Measles) is in force.

Dwellings of the Poorer Classes.

The Dwellings of the Poorer Classes are much better from a Sanitary point of view than they were a few years since, and present owners seem fully alive to their responsibility and steadily effect necessary improvements.

Inspection of District.

I have inspected the district at various times during the year and visited all Slaughter-houses, Dairies, and Bakeries, and only found it necessary to make formal complaint in one instance, when the suggested alterations were carried out.

Common Lodging-houses.

The Common Lodging-houses are visited frequently by the Sergeant of Police, who acts as Inspector, and reports them as clean and well looked after.

Slaughter-houses

The Slaughter-houses are as cleanly as such places can well be when situate in the centre of the Town in confined spaces so near dwelling-houses. I fear a Public Slaughter-house will not be available in the near future.

Zymotic Diseases.

One case of Enteric Fever was reported during the year, six cases of Scarlet Fever, and two of Diphtheria were also notified; one of the latter were removed to the Isolation Hospital.

Measles were epidemic early in the year, 323 cases being notified. Seven deaths of very young children resulted, the general death rate as well as the infantile rate being considerably increased from this cause. Whooping Cough has been prevalent during the latter half of the year and two deaths have been registered as having been due to them primarily. Two deaths have also been registered from Influenza.

Birth Rate.

One hundred and eight births were registered during the year, the Birth Rate being 20·04 per 1,000 population.

Seventy-four deaths were registered during the same period, the Death Rate which was only 13·06 last year having risen from causes already alluded to to 15·19 per 1,000 population. Death Rate.

Last year no death resulted from Zymotic Disease, whilst this year seven deaths from Measles, two from Whooping Cough, one from Diphtheria, and one from Diarrhœa, have caused the Zymotic Death Rate to reach 2·24.

The deaths of Infants under one year is as 126 to 1,000 births. Four deaths have resulted from Phthisis and one from Cancer. Three Inquests have been held during the year.

The Tables of Statistics required by the Local Government Board and the Report of the Inspector of Nuisances are appended hereto.

I am, gentleman,

Yours faithfully,

R. PURNELL,

Medical Officer of Health.

INSPECTOR OF NUISANCES'

SUMMARY OF WORK FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31st, 1897.

(Full Particulars were given to the Authority in regular Monthly Reports.)

Premises visited and inspected on complaint or information, as entered in Inspector's Journal	556
Letters and Written Notices served	50
Weekly visits to Slaughter-houses	676
Notices served to properly Lime-wash all Slaughter-houses in accordance with the Bye-Laws	52
Visits of Inspection to 12 Bakehouses	48
Orders given by the Board, served	3
Improved Water Supply from Company's Mains	19
Nuisances removed—	
Accumulations of Manure, Ashes, etc.	23
Defective Shooting to Eaves	9
„ or Choked Closets	8
„ „ Drains	14
Overcrowding	1
Keeping Pigs contrary to Bye-Laws	5
Smoke Nuisances, Bad Smells, etc., etc.	31

I have at regular intervals visited all the Dairies, Milk-shops, and Public Stable Yards in the City, have found them clean and in good condition. The large increase of numbers in the first Item of this Summary is mainly due to the epidemic of Measles in the City. In every case of Infectious Disease reported to me by the Medical Officer, I at once visited and served his formal printed instructions for treatment of patient and for the taking of proper precautionary measures. Every case is shewn in "Inspector's Journal" with date, age, sex, and residence of each patient; constantly visited the houses during illness, supplied disinfectants where required, and at the proper time personally attended to the disinfecting and cleansing of the infected places.

Wm. H. JENKINS,

Inspector of Nuisances.

January 11th, 1898.

50-1-98-D.W.